

**CLAIMS**

1. A distribution system (1, 6) for transfer of components (8) to a position for picking by a pick and place machine head, the distribution system (1, 6) comprising:
- 5 at least one component distributor module (1) comprising a belt member (12) adapted to the width of the component (8) to be transferred; and a base portion (6) comprising a motive means (4) adapted to drive a belt member (12) of the at least one component distributor module (1);
- 10 characterised in that the at least one component distributor module (1) is adapted to be releasably fixed to the base portion (6).
2. The distribution system of claim 1, further comprising releasable fixing means (34, 10; 13; 2) arranged to act between the base portion (6) and the at
- 15 least one component distributor module (1).
3. The distribution system of claim 2, wherein the releasable fixing means comprises a male member (34; 13) provided on one of the base portion (6) and the at least one component distributor module (1), and a female member (10)
- 20 provided on the other of the base portion (6) and the at least one component distributor module (1), and a releasable locking member (2) arranged to prevent the male (34; 13) and female (10) members from disengaging from one another when locked, and further arranged to permit the female (10) and male (34; 13) members to engage/disengage one another when unlocked.
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4. The distribution system of claim 3, wherein the male (34) and female (10) member are provided at one side of the said one of the base portion (6) and the at least one component distributor module (1), and the releasable locking member (2) is provided at the other side of the said one of the base portion (6)
- 30 and the at least one component distributor module (1).
5. The distribution system of either of claims 3 or 4, wherein the male member (34; 13) comprises a protruding member (34; 13) and the female

member (10) comprises a groove or the like (10), the protruding member (34; 13) and groove (10) arranged to provide a close fit with one another.

- 5 6. The distribution system of any of claims 3 to 5, wherein the releasable locking member comprises a clip means (2) provided on one of the base portion (6) and the at least one component distributor module (1), wherein the clip means (2) can be releasably secured to the said one (6; 1) whilst securely trapping a portion of the other of the base portion (6) and the component distributor module (1).

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7. The distribution system of any preceding claim, characterized by the transfer of the component (8) by the belt (12) to a location in which the component (8) is held from further movement by a retractible member (9) until the component (8) is picked by the pick and place head.

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8. The distribution system of claim 7, wherein the retractible member (9) is provided on the base portion (6) and driven by a second motive means (7) provided on the base portion (6).

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9. A component distributor module (1) for use in a distribution system (1, 6) for the transfer of components (8) to a position for picking by a pick and place machine head, the component distributor module (1) comprising:

a belt member (12) adapted to the width of the component (8) to be transferred; and releasable fixing means (10; 13; 2) to permit the component distributor module (1) to be releasably secured to a base portion (6).

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10. A base portion (6) for use in a distribution system (1, 6) for the transfer of components (8) to a position for picking by a pick and place machine head, the base portion (1) comprising:

a motive means (4) adapted to drive a belt member (12) of at least one component distributor module (1); and releasable fixing means (34 ; 2) to permit one or more component distributor modules (1) to be releasably secured to the base portion (6).

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